2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

shredded and twisted into a thread, is also used for all the bindings.

The bow is grasped with the thumb, second, third, and fourth fingers of the left hand, the first finger remaining straight out and pointing in the direction of the mark. The arrow rests against the left side of the belly of the bow and is held with the thumb and first finger of the right hand, which grasp it over the string. The bow is held in a vertical position and the arrow is drawn back until its head is about two inches in front of the belly. This is for shooting at normal ranges; but if it is wished to increase the distance the arrow can be drawn back behind the belly, in which case the whole bow is pointed slightly upwards in order to give the arrow a higher trajectory. In order to tighten the bow-string it is merely undone and given a few twists. Some people wear a protector bracelet of bullock's horn on the left wrist, but this is not really essential.

In addition to the ordinary bow used for hunting there is also a small pellet bow, with which mud pellets, about the size of a marble, are used. It is used principally to kill small birds and also to scare them away from the crops, and is really little more than boys' plaything.

The only tool in use is the *ban*, a very slightly curved knife about fourteen inches in length. It looks something like a rather clumsy and heavy carving knife, but with a rounded end instead of a point. It is used for everything, from making bows and arrows to the construction of a house; and while in European hands it appears to be a clumsy weapon, Lepchas are able to use it successfully for the very finest work. No Lepcha, not even a Lama, is ever without his *ban*, which is worn in a bamboo half-sheath and suspended over one shoulder by a length of cane. They are far more skilful in its use than the Gurkha is with his *khukri*, another general utility weapon, which incidentally is never used as a boomerang, as some of the tall stories current during the war years would lead one to suppose. There are no black-smiths among the Lepchas, and *ban* blades are imported

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

from Mangen or Gangtok, being afterwards fitted with wooden handles by their owners. They cost from one to two rupees each. I have often seen a Lepcha cut down a bamboo as thick as a man's arm with a couple of strokes and a few seconds later, using the very same tool, put a point on a pencil that would be good enough to draw the finest line. Give a Lepcha his *ban* and put him in his own native forest and he will make you anything from a house to a wooden plate off which to eat your food. With the same one weapon he will make you a bow and arrows, and then skin and prepare the game. I never ceased to wonder at his skill.

There were two ancient matchlocks in Lingtem, one of which Palden occasionally borrowed. It was fitted with a bipod of antelope horns, and when the fuse was lighted usually spluttered for some seconds before going off with a deafening bang; but by this time the selected prey had long since flown. I would not myself have used it for untold cash; but in the eyes of its owner, and perhaps in the rest of the village, it was a symbol of progress—a mark of the civilised man.